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A New Race of Owl, *Otus bakkamoena*, from Negros, Philippine Islands

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In the Philippine bird collection recently received from Dr. D. S. Rabor of Silliman University, Negros Island, were three specimens of a little owl that appeared strikingly different from any of those known from the Philippines. It appeared to be an undescribed representative of *Otus bakkamoena*, a species known from several Philippine Islands but hitherto not from Negros. To check its distinctiveness Dr. E. Mayr of the American Museum, and H. G. Deignan of the United States National Museum kindly examined two of the specimens. Dr. Mayr writes me: "The two little *Otus* from Negros Island look like an excellent race The sharp contrast between the color of the head, and that of the back seem unique for the species *bakkamoena* or any related *Otus*." Mr. Deignan, who has just finished a review of *Otus bakkamoena*, writes me that they are unlike anything he has seen, and he is inclined to consider them as representing a new species.

The taxonomy and nomenclature of this species in the Philippines has still a number of unanswered questions; problems that can only be indicated at the present time. Four races are currently recognised, by Delacour and Mayr (1946) and Deignan (1950): *everetti*, *fuliginosus*, *boholensis* and *whiteheadi*; though Stresemann (1925), Hachisuka (1934), and Peters (1940) arrived at somewhat different conclusions.

Otus bakkamoena everetti (Tweeddale) was described in 1878 from Zamboanga, Mindanao as having the broad dark-brown mark in the form of a parallelogram on the head and nape, the pale forehead, stripe over each eye running into the ear coverts, the pale collar on the hind neck and the dark stripe leading from behind the eye to include most of the ear tufts; wing

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6.5 in. (165 mm.), 9 6.75 in. (171 mm.). We have a single specimen of this from Cotabato, Mindanao which corresponds well with the description. It is a male, wing 161 mm. The tarsal feathering does not quite reach to the base of the toes.

Otus bakkamoena boholensis McGregor, was described in 1907 from Bohol Island. It was not compared with *everetti*, but the description in detail includes "crown, nape, and interscapular area conspicuously blackish"; "sandy buff forming a narrow and hidden nuchal band"; "forehead whitish, the whitish marking continued as a wide band over each eye to tips of ear tufts"; "feathering of tarsi extending nearly to basal joint of toes," which indicates definitely it is of the species group *bakkamoena*. The further description, ear coverts mostly greyish; sides of neck mostly whitish; a largely whitish ruff back of ear coverts; breast, sides, and abdomen mostly rufescent cinnamon, all with various markings, and the upperparts vermiculated with sandy buff, light buff, and blackish brown and marked with large, irregular blackish brown spots; wing (9) 155, seem all applicable to descriptions of *O. b. everetti* and our specimen of it. Though Hachisuka (1934, p. 54), Peters (1940, p. 100), Delacour and Mayr (1946, p. 115) and Deignan (1950, p. 198) recognise this race, Stresemann (1925, p. 194) listed the name with a question mark as a synonym of *O. b. everetti*. The type apparently remained unique and presumably was destroyed with the rest of the Philippine National Museum collection in Manila. No Bohol specimens are extant in the Chicago, New York, or Washington museums. Until it is shown that the Bohol birds differ from *everetti*, which seems doubtful, it is advisable to treat *boholensis* as a synonym of *everetti*.

Otus bakkamoena fuliginosus (Sharpe) was described in 1888 from Palawan on the basis of a juvenile plumaged bird; and while recognised by Peters (1940, p. 100), Delacour and Mayr (1946, p. 266), and Deignan (1950, p. 197), it was synonymized by Hachisuka (1934, p. 55) with *O. b. everetti*. Earlier Stresemann (1925, p. 194) in his review of this group had recognised it, but with the comment that it was perhaps identical with *O. b. everetti*. Hartert (1925, p. 262) re-examined the type, pointed out that it was in immature plumage, and the incoming adult feathers were very like those of *everetti*. Apparently lack of appreciation of this resulted in McGregor (1909, p. 254) considering the type unique and also recording *O. b. everetti* from Palawan. Hartert concluded that *fuliginosus* was evidently a small representative of *everetti*, and the measurements McGregor and Deignan give of Palawan birds (wing 140, 137 mm.) support this view. Until more material is available to check this conclusion it seems advisable to consider this a valid race resembling *everetti*, but smaller.

Otus bakkamoena whiteheadi (Grant) was described in 1895 from the mountains of Lepanto, Northern Luzon as being like *everetti* but larger and the tarsi feathered to the base of the toes. A rufous and a grey phase are known. McGregor (1909, p. 256) gave measurements wing, 185-188; 9 195-203 mm. Stresemann (1925, p. 194) considered it a giant representative of *O. bakkamoena* but kept it a separate species, as did Peters (1940, p. 97) while Hachisuka (1934, p. 53), Delacour and Mayr (1946, p. 115) and Deignan (1950, p. 197) consider it a subspecies of *bakkamoena*. Perhaps the latter is the preferable course. The range was extended southward to the lowlands of central Luzon by Hachisuka (1934, p. 53) who recorded a specimen collected by Steere at Laguna near Manila, and by Gilliard (1950, p. 484) with a specimen from the lowlands of eastern Bataan.

Though the entity of *whiteheadi* is clear, there is the awkwardness of the name *Otus megalotis* Gray, 1844. Stresemann (1925, p. 194) examined the type, presumably from Manila, and found it to be a bird in immature plumage, and probably representing the bird usually known as *whiteheadi*. Hachisuka synonymized the earlier name with the more recent *whiteheadi* and Delacour and Mayr, (1945, p. 106) say the unique type of this species should be re-examined to determine its allocation to some Philippine owl, and say that it is highly unlikely that it refers to the mountain form *whiteheadi* as the range of that form was inaccessible at the time *megalotis* (prior to 1840) was collected. This last of course does not apply. However, it seems advisable to have the type of *megalotis* compared with an immature *whiteheadi* of similar age (a very young specimen of *whiteheadi* was collected by Whitehead, see Grant, 1895, p. 440), before the final disposal of names is considered.

Otus bakkamoena nigrorum new subspecies

Type. Chicago Natural History Museum No. 191233 from Lake Balinsasayao, Negros Island, Philippines. Adult female, collected May 23, 1949 by D. S. Rabor.

Diagnosis. Differing from other races in the rufous of face, and sides and back of neck contrasting sharply with the rest of the plumage.

Similar to *O. b. everetti* in having a blackish parallelogram on crown and nape; a whitish forehead contiguous with a whitish line over the eye and extending onto the "ear tufts"; a pale collar on the hind neck; tarsal feathering extending nearly to the toes; and no large light areas in the scapulars, but very different from it in having the pale forehead and superciliary nearly pure white and only lightly marked with fine dark lines (rather than greyish white and heavily freckled with dusky); the blackish streaks on crown and

marks on hind neck with a nearly clear rufous background (rather than dull brown, heavily vermiculated); the "ear tufts," side of face from eye posteriorly, the ear coverts, and sides of neck nearly clear, bright rufous, only fairly vermiculated with blackish (instead of greyish heavily vermiculated with buffy and blackish) and the breast and belly much whiter (rather than strongly ochraceous tinged).

Size. Wing c 148, ♀ 146; tail 70, ♀ 70; culmen 22, ♀ 24; tarsus ₃₁, ♀ 30 mm.

Range. Known only from three specimens from Negros Island.

Remarks. The two adults are very similar in having the top and the side of the neck and head bright rufous with few bars and vermiculations, contrasting with the dull brown back which is finely variegated with buff and blackish, and with the whitish underparts.

The male has the throat, breast and abdomen nearly pure white, lightly vermiculated with brownish and with a few dark shaft streaks; the tarsus is immaculate white.

The female is similar but has a slight rufous tinge to the throat and breast, the vermiculations and shaft streaks of the underparts are heavier and more plentiful and the tarsi are irregularly barred.

The immature bird, with a wing of 128, has the top of head and neck rufous buffy, finely barred with blackish; the rest of the upperparts buffy and blackish barred; the sides of the face nearly clear rufous, the feathers of the facial disk with faint whitish shaft streaks; the throat is rufous buffy, faintly marked with blackish, and the rest of the underparts are buffy to buffy white, barred with dusky; tarsi whitish, obscurely barred with dusky.

This is obviously not an excessively rufous phase of *everetti*, for the rufous is confined to the head, and the underparts are less rufous than a specimen in the grey phase of *everetti*.

These three birds are very distinct from the specimen and the description of *everetti*. *O. b. boholensis* is very similar and probably identical with *everetti*. *O. b. fuliginosus* is apparently like *everetti* but smaller; *whiteheadi* is much larger, with more feathering on the tarsus, and the descriptions do not mention any rufous head; and *megalotis* is probably the young of *whiteheadi*; in any case it is larger and does not have the rufous head of the present form.

With the many loose ends left in the taxonomy of the owls of this species from the Philippines, I would have hesitated to describe it if it were not for the immature bird reflecting, though to a lesser degree, the contrasting rufous head of the adult.

It seems advisable to recognise tentatively the following subspecies from the Philippines:

(1) *Otus bakkamoena fuliginosus* (Sharpe), Palawan. A small form, wing 137-140 mm.

(2) *Otus bakkamoena whiteheadi* (Grant), northern and central Luzon. A large form, wing 185-203 mm.; also differing from other races in tarsus being feathered to toes. The name *Otus megalotis* may have to be used for this bird.

(3) *Otus bakkamoena nigrorum* Rand, Negros Island. A medium sized form, wing 146, 148 mm.; differing from all other races in that the top and sides of head and neck are bright rufous, contrasting with rest of plumage.

(4) *Otus bakkamoena everetti* (Tweeddale), Bohol, Samar, Mindano, Basilan. A medium sized form, wing 165-171 mm. *Otus boholensis* appears to be a synonym.

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